

What Is an MCH Early Childhood System?

Wisconsin's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program defines an Early Childhood System as:

Local public health departments working with community partners to build and integrate services that support and promote optimal physical, mental, and social health and development of all children and their families. Important features include:

- Emphasis on **Life Course Theory** and the importance of **early childhood**
- **Collaboration** across agencies and partnerships with broad-based stakeholders
- **Coordination** and **non-duplication** of efforts
- **Accessibility** and **equitability** for those at highest risk
- **Accountability**
- **Quality improvement** processes
- Ability to make best use of **limited resources** and **sustain** efforts over time

Why Are We Building Early Childhood Systems?

- Early Childhood Systems are a fundamental component of improving maternal, child, and family health.
- Agencies, stakeholders, and partners working together in a coordinated way are likely to have a greater impact than one agency working alone.
- The health care environment is changing. The primary purpose of Title V, particularly in light of the Affordable Care Act, is not to provide comprehensive health care services – services that were needed when the Title V MCH Block Grant was originally passed in 1935. Today the focus is on population-based and systems-building services. This shift maximizes the reach of Title V dollars with the intention of using limited resources efficiently.
- The federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau and other states are moving in this direction!

What Do Early Childhood Systems Look Like in Wisconsin?

Local public health departments in Wisconsin are working on one or both of the following initiatives:

Keeping Kids Alive – Local health departments work with partners to establish a Child Death Review or Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Team. Teams collect and review data to identify and recommend community prevention activities.

Wisconsin Healthiest Families – Local health departments work with partners to build and integrate services and supports to address child development, mental health, safety and injury prevention, and family supports.

What Is the Role of the Local Health Departments within MCH Early Childhood Systems?

Local health departments play an important role within Early Childhood Systems. They:

- Prioritize local health department objectives
- Gather and engage partners
- Guide the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation steps
- Assure the community moves the work forward in a coordinated manner
- Promote accountability
- Help build conditions for [Collective Impact](#): 1) common agenda; 2) shared measurement system; 3) mutually reinforcing activities; 4) continuous communication; and 5) backbone support organization